REPORT

NEWFOUNDLAND PROVINCIAL PARKS

VISITOR PROFILE SURVEY 1990

by

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Executive Summary

The focus of this final report concerns the data analysis phase of sets of variables associated with a Newfoundland Provincial Parks Visitor Profile Survey, conducted in the summer of 1990. A series of variables were identified as being of importance to the park user and also to the management of provincial parks within Newfoundland.

This report provides findings concerning the data collection stage of the current investigation. These findings and the conclusions which dervive from them will assist Provincial Park management in considering planning future interventions concerning user-demand in several geographical regions of the province.

The general conclusions reached in the current research are as follows:

1. The majority of respondents (85%) felt it was very important to have Provincial Parks in Newfoundland.
2. Ninety eight percent of respondents felt it was important to preserve significant and representative examples of the Province's natural heritage.
3. The facilities/services in the Provincial Parks were perceived very positively.
4. Generally there was a great deal of interest in learning about the Provincial Park's resource conservation activities.

5. The protection of wildlife was seen as being very important.

6. Poaching in the Province was viewed very negatively.

The detailed findings in this report will assist in making it possible, in the future, to develop profiles of potential park user groups and serve to inform Provincial Parks in subsequent planning in various regions of the Province. From this information Parks will be empowered in strategies aimed at advertising, promoting and marketing provincial parks, to both current users and potential users.

Introduction

The questionnaire designed for the present study had the focus of exploring and examining the need for a variety of attributes, facilities and services which are provided by Provincial Parks, together with some issues concerning poaching and related topics.

> Provincial parks should have an accurate and up-to-date database concerning park users; a continually updated file of potential ideas for future development, and easily accessible information about all of their programmes geared toward serving existing and future park users.

Information derived from this study will be useful to opinion leaders, legislators, and educators to enable them to better prepare for the challenges within the environment, particularly with respect to Provincial Park usage and protection.

Scope and Objectives

The scope of this study included the development of a questionnaire to examine a number of issues pertaining to Provincial Park usage. To do this it was necessary to identify aspects concerning parks and park facilities in a variety of regions in Newfoundland. The identification of users and their needs required the researcher, in conjunction with representatives from Provincial Parks, to develop a comprehensive research instrument. By using this instrument, the researcher attempted to account for associations between the needs of Provincial Parks and the users of the parks.

Limitations of Study

Financial and time constraints did not adequately allow for randomly sampling the general population. Focus groups would have been preferred in the initial stages of this study in order to assist in the determination of the main areas to be addressed in the questionnaire. However, as previously stated the time frame did not permit this to be carried out.

The generalizations which arise from this study apply only to the geographical regions from which the samples were drawn.

Significance of Study

This study is significant from a strategic perspective for the future development and implementation of services and facilities which are offered in Newfoundland to Provincial Park users. It is also of importance for the planning and development of resources within the parks. The approach to the study involved a broad spectrum of respondent information pertaining to economic impact, attractions and facilities, the environment, personal benefits derived from parks, poaching issues and standard demographics.

Information obtained from this study will provide a timely data base on issues pertaining to interventions which are pertinent for Provincial Parks, in order to pursue future development and the delivery of park services.

Research Methodology

In keeping with the objectives of the present research a survey research approach was deemed appropriate. In order to provide data which would allow the necessary identification of potential user markets, a structured questionnaire was developed by the researcher and Provincial Park representatives.

Data Collection

The Nature of the Sample

The sampling frame was to a large extent self-selected by virtue of the population under study. The study involved the collection of data pertaining to the informational planning and support needs of various user groups and their desire to become involved in availing of the services provided by Parks. The focus of the study was oriented toward actual park users. The actual boundary of the geographical region covered in this study included the environs of 10 Provincial Parks within Newfoundland:

1. Butterpot Park
2. Gushues Pond Park
3. La Manche Park
4. Notre Dame Park
5. Beothuck Park
6. Square Pond Park
7. Squire's Memorial Park
8. Blow Me Down Park
9. Grand Codroy Park
10. Barachois Pond Park

The sample consisted of actual park visitors to the ten parks under study. Whilst there are certain problems with respect to the utilization of such a sampling approach as identified in the current study, the time constraints did not permit a more rigorous sampling approach. Nevertheless, the findings are certainly illustrative of park users across Newfoundland.

In some instances questionnaires were handed out by park employees in the park and in other cases the questionnaires were distributed at the park entrance. Respondents were instructed to complete the questionnaire after they had finished their visit to the park and return it to the park officers or to the information kiosk when leaving the park. A total of 741 completed, usable questionnaires were obtained.

Statistical Analysis Firstly, data was collected as mentioned above using the aforementioned research instrument. Secondly, at this point, only univariate statistical analysis was performed in order to get an aggregate profile of all 10 parks. Separate profiles of each individual park were also constructed, but the sample sizes from some of the parks were not large enough to permit further analysis of a practical nature. Data analysis was conducted through the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

THE FINDINGS

Data was obtained concerning permanent place of residence, including postal code. The number of people, together with ages, in the travelling party was also obtained. The average number of people for each age group in the travelling party is shown below:

Average #	Age Group
1.38	1 thru 5 years
1.44	6 thru 12 years
1.86	13 thru 21 years
1.91	22 thru 35 years
1.65	36 thru 45 years
1.64	46 thru 64 years
1.68	65 years and over

With respect to the travelling party itself, 41% consisted of couples, 38% of families with children and 18% of a group of friends. Only 2% were travelling alone.

When asked if the Provincial Park was the main destination, 42% indicated that it was their main destination, 39% indicated that the park was a planned stop on their journey and 18% indicated that the park was an unplanned stop. Only 11% of respondents indicated that this was their first visit to that particular park. This finding shows that many of the respondents were repeat visitors and 72% had visited a park within the last month. By far the majority of respondents (87%) indicated that their visit was part of an overnight trip.

The average number of hours people spent in the park during

their visit was 22 hours and 46% indicated that they planned to return at least once more during the remainder of the summer.

Respondents were asked to indicate the amount of expenditures their party spent on a variety of items and these amounts are indicated on the following page:

$ Average Expenditure	Item
$129.55	Transportation
$138.67	Food & Beverages
$ 60.44	Accommodation
$ 67.92	Recreation
$148.24	Other

Respondents were asked what attractions and facilities they used while visiting the park and 58% indicated that they used hiking trails; 58% went swimming; 48% used picnic areas; 68% used beach areas; 26% went fishing; 16% went canoeing/boating and 16% used other attractions or facilities.

The next set of questions concerned the rating of facilities and services in the park on a 5-point Likert type scale, with 1 indicating excellent and 5 indicating unsatisfactory. The average rating for each service/facility is listed on the next page:

Service/Facility	Rating
Park roads	2.35
Park signs	2.00
Campsites	2.20
Picnic sites	2.14
Swimming area	2.39
Hiking trails	2.35
Toilets	2.48
Drinking water	2.32
Firewood supply	2.36
Garbage collection	1.71
Park supervision	1.80

As can be seen the overall ratings are very positive for the services and facilities in Provincial Parks. Respondents indicated that they first learned of Provincial Parks in a variety of ways, with friends and relatives being the most frequently mentioned (36%), followed by brochures/posters (16%) and word of mouth (14%). Road maps and road signs were also mentioned, (8.3% and 9.7% respectively) and 14% indicated that they learnt of Provincial Parks by other methods.

Seventy-seven percent of respondents indicated that they would be interested in learning about the park's resource conservation activities. The greatest interest was shown in learning about the moose population in the park (52%), followed by learning about the reintroduction of endangered species (48%). Learning about forest fire prevention ranked third (44%); learning about acid rain damage came next(41%); learning about salmon management and the natural landscape of the park tied for fifth place (35%) and they were followed by learning about wild flowers (34%), learning about bears and bear management (31%) and learning about insects/bugs (29%).

Only a small percentage of respondents did any fishing within the park (18%). By far the majority of respondents (85%) felt it was very important to have Provincial Parks in Newfoundland. Eighty percent of respondents felt that it was very important to preserve significant and representative examples of the Province's natural heritage and 18% felt it was fairly important to do so. When asked how important it was to have places to learn about nature, through interpretation programs, 59% felt it was very important and 38% that it was fairly important. A resounding 87% of respondents felt that it was very important to have places to go camping, picnicking and swimming, while 64% felt that it was very important to have places to do outdoor activities other than camping.

The protection of wildlife was seen as being very important by 86% of respondents.

Provincial parks were seen as being very important for the stimulation of the economy for local communities by only 54% of respondents. The level of satisfaction with the areas that have been selected and established for protection was not as good as might have been expected, with 49% being very satisfied and 32% being somewhat satisfied.

The number of respondents that were familiar with the 1985 Provincial Parks Policy was disappointing, only 23% being familiar with the policy. However, of those familiar with the policy, 91% were satisfied with it. Findings concerning the Park Classification System were equally disappointing, with only 29% of respondents feeling quite well or very well informed about the system.

Respondents were asked how important a number of benefits were to their visit to the Provincial Park. They were asked to rate the items on a 5 point Likert - type scale, with 1 being extremely important and 5 being not at all important. The ratings are presented on the next page:

Benefits	Rating
being in a natural setting	1.39
being with friends and family	1.72
having a chance to relax	1.30
feeling a sense of conquest	3.03
having a chance to reflect on life	2.54
gaining an appreciation of nature	1.74
being physically challenged	2.88
feeling free from pressures	1.56
socializing with other visitors	2.33
being away from crowds	1.98
meeting new people	2.29
feeling rejuvenated	2.17
learning about oneself	2.88
discovering something new	2.12
being where it is quiet	1.70

As can be seen from the averages ratings, people like to go to the Provincial Parks to relax, feel free from pressures, be in a quiet natural setting and gain an appreciation of nature. At the same time it is very important to be with friends and family and away from crowds. Of least importance was feeling a sense of conquest, learning about oneself, being physically challenged and having a chance to reflect on life.

As an addendum to the questionnaire was a section of questions concerning poaching in the Province. Respondents were

asked to indicate their level of agreement on a number of statements, based on a 5 point Likert - type scale, with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree. The majority of respondents strongly disagreed that poaching for subsistence was a valid reason to break game/fish laws (63%) and almost 90% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that harvesting fish or game out of season was not really poaching.

There was some uncertainty as to whether or not poaching for subsistence was widespread across the Province, with 33% feeling it was, 32% being uncertain and 35% feeling it was not widespread. With respect to poaching for sale being widespread, there was again uncertainty, 40% feeling it was widespread, 33% being uncertain and 16% feeling it was not widespread. The majority of respondents strongly felt that poaching for sale was not a valid reason to break game/fish laws (88%).

Moose poaching was generally seen as being a serious problem (58%) and viewed as being widespread by 58% of respondents also. Caribou poaching was seen as being a serious problem by 34% and as being widespread by 39% of respondents. Salmon poaching was seen as being a serious problem by 69% of respondents and as being widespread by 68% of respondents. The poaching of migratory birds was viewed as being a serious problem by 46% of respondents and as being widespread by 41% of respondents.

The present penalties for poaching were seen as not being harsh enough for moose poaching (61%), caribou poaching (61%), salmon poaching (69%) or for migratory bird poaching (64%). There

was strong agreement that someone who poaches for sale should be more severely punished than someone who poaches for their own food use (80%) and finally there was a strong feeling that the government does not provide adequate staff to protect and enforce game and fish laws (65%).

Poaching was generally viewed in a negative way by a large percentage of the respondents and it was felt overall, that penalties were not harsh enough as they presently stand.

In conclusion, the findings from this study indicate that the Provincial Parks are viewed in a very positive manner by therespondents and that the Parks provide a much needed recreational and natural facility for the people of Newfoundland. However, attention has to be given to the task of making people more aware of the 1985 Provincial Parks Policy and the Park Classification System and this could be done in conjunction with a more aggressive promotional and marketing campaign for Provincial Parks.